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Marginal notes

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Marginal notes

The theme of this fourth volume of the multilingual journal and series ACTA TRANSLATOLOGICA HELSINGIENSIA is *marginalia*, ‘marginal notes’, which is ‘reunahuomautuksia’ in Finnish and ‘randanmärkningar’ in Swedish. We therefore encouraged our invited contributors to look beyond the mainstream questions in their respective fields and instead write on topics that are marginal. At first glance, these are topics that are non-essential, yet are worth examining due to the dynamic nature of the periphery.

FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS

Our present theme originates from observations made by Edgar Allan POE (1809–1849) in *Marginalia*, a *collectanea* based on the author’s notes from November 1844 to September 1849. POE provides us with a seminal introduction to the nature of *marginalia* as “purely marginal jottings” in a quotation from the *Democratic Review*, November 1844:

But the purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the Memorandum Book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value. They have a rank somewhat above the chance and desultory comments of literary chit-chat – for these latter are not unfrequently “talk for talk’s sake,” hurried out of the mouth; while the *marginalia* are deliberately pencilled, because the mind of the reader wishes to unburthen itself of a *thought*; – however flippant – however silly – however trivial – still a thought indeed, not merely a thing that might have been a thought in time, and under more favorable circumstances. In the *marginalia*, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly – boldly – originally – with *abandonnement* – without conceit [...]. (*Marginalia* pp. 1–2; emphases in the original)

As a writer, POE is known for his bizarre stories – tales of mystery and imagination – and this quotation draws a parallel between marginal comments and purpose-free writing that conveys inner speech, imbued with originality, freshness, deliberateness, and thought.

We can also approach our theme from another vantage point inspired by Poe. The following extract from the *Southern Literary Messenger*, May 1849, conveys POE’s reflections on imagination as an essential element in all creative activity and therefore in research as well:

Ritva Hartama-Heinonen & Pirjo Kukkonen (eds.)

Marginalia

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Thus, the range of Imagination is unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. [...] But, in general, the richness or force of the matters combined; the facility of discovering combinable novelties worth combining; and, especially the absolute “chemical combination” of the completed mass — are the particulars to be regarded in our estimate of Imagination. It is this thorough harmony of an imaginative work which so often causes it to be undervalued by the thoughtless, through the character of *obviousness* which is superinduced. We are apt to find ourselves asking *why* it is that these combinations have never been imagined before. (*Marginalia* p. 156; emphases in the original)

As the readers of the present volume will discover, features that have inspired our contributors in this “so nearly impossible a task, to fancy the known unknown” (*Marginalia* p. 33) involve marginality and imagination as well as centre and periphery and their dialogic polyphony. These features have resulted in novel thematic and methodological combinations.

POE, *Marginalia*, and the universe of translation and translational discourse

All of the articles in this volume have a more or less inherent connection with translating and translations – they contribute to a translational discourse and to the acknowledged field of translation studies and create the universe of translation. Even here, we can see a subtle link to POE, particularly if we remember his prose poem *Eureka* (1848), “an essay on the material and spiritual universe”. To some extent, this is an apt characterisation of the present anthology as well. However we wish to interpret it, the conception of a universe is illustrated concretely in the photo on the cover of this volume: the Milky Way in the foreground, and the infinite, all-embracing cosmos in the background.

The translational link to our microcosmos, as we might put it, also becomes tangible through some of the passages in *Marginalia*, in which POE discusses the essence of creating marginal notes and their later transferral from their place of origin. He describes many features that are characteristic of marginalia, such as they concern matters that are worth remembering (p. 1), and that comprehensibility may suffer when the notes are moved – when the context is transferred from the text. In other words, they are translated, “*traduit* (translated)” and “*overzezet* (turned topsy-turvy)” (p. 3–4). POE finally arrives at the conclusion that “nonsense [is] the essential sense of the Marginal Note” (p. 4).

Some of the views espoused by POE attests to his being a true pioneer, a translation theoretician *avant la lettre* (see Hartama-Heinonen 2008: 216, note 6). In *Graham's Magazine*, November 1846, he reviewed a translated book, which in his estimation was a highly imperfect rendering, and thus anticipated what Translation Studies later referred to as dynamical equivalence, or the communicative approach to translation. POE (*Marginalia* p. 105–106; emphases in the original) noted “a too literal rendering of *local peculiarities of*

phrase”, specifically, how idioms are translated too literally and how the tone of the source text has been damaged:

There is one point (never yet, I believe, noticed) which, obviously, should be considered in translation. We should so render the original that *the version should impress the people for whom it is intended, just as the original impresses the people for whom it (the original) is intended*. ... A distinction, of course, should be observed between those peculiarities of phrase which appertain to the nation and those which belong to the author himself — for these latter will have a similar effect upon *all* nations, and should be literally translated. ... We should pride ourselves less upon literalism and more upon dexterity at paraphrase. Is it not clear that, by such dexterity, *a translation may be made to convey to a foreigner a juster conception of an original than could the original itself?*

This is POE, the theorist, who advises in one of his notes not to separate “practice from the theory which includes it. In all cases, if the practice fail[s], it is because the theory is imperfect.” (p. 69). Based on this statement, we can only speculate that he would have been an excellent spokesperson for the current research-based translator education.

Interlingual translation is a matter of interpreting verbal signs in one language with the help of another (Jakobson [1959] 1966: 233). For POE, verbal signs – words and particularly those which are printed – “are murderous things” (*Marginalia* p. 74). The history of translation demonstrates that this can apply to translated words as well: they can also be fatal and cost the translator their life. An extreme case was Etienne DOLET (1509–1546), who was burned at the stake. Despite this tragic end, his five rules for translators published in *La manière de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre* (1540) are remembered to this day and mentioned as one of the early translation(theoretical) principles (for instance, see Steiner [1975] 1992: 276–277).

POE (pp. 88–89) also strongly emphasised the power of words: “I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of the reach of language.” This notion of the translatability of thoughts finds continuation or a counterpart in the works of Eugene A. NIDA and Charles R. TABER ([1969] 1982: 4; their emphasis). They also had faith in the omnipotent power of translation: “*Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message.*” As a matter of fact, while NIDA and TABER had reservations regarding the possibility of rendering form, POE (pp. 88–90) expressed uncertainty concerning the possibility of conveying fancy and its absolute or supreme novelty.

A famous dictum by NOVALIS is that “The artist belongs to his work, not the work to the artist.” POE (pp. 98–99) cites this dictum, but he is not satisfied with its message, that it is the artist who is a slave to the actual theme and not vice versa. Instead, POE claims that for a genuine artist, the theme is clay and the work that belongs to the artist. The very choice of material, clay of different types and with different features, attests to an artist’s excellence. The same phe-

nomenon can certainly be observed in the work of a scholar or a translator, as both are true artists in their own right. This is reflected in their decisions concerning research interests, paradigms, topics and research designs, diverse methodological approaches and arguments or when they choose between diverse semantic, syntactic, or pragmatic solutions and strategic or tactical alternatives. All these decisions are made to “best serve the purposes of the thing to be wrought — of the idea to be made out, or, more exactly, of the impression to be conveyed” (p. 99).

The interplay between *centre* and *periphery*

In addition to translation, a fundamental concept in the present volume is being *in the margin*, or *in the periphery*. The Latin form *marginem*, from *margō*, has the meanings of ‘edge’, ‘brink’, ‘border’, and ‘margin’. Historically, based on old scripts and manuscripts, this *being in/on the margin* also includes the opposite idea, that of being at the centre. (OED 2019, s.v. *margin*, *marginal*.) It was common practice in medieval scripts for the main text and the notes written in the margins to engage in a dialogue. Another contemporary example concerns translators’ paratextual comments in the margins. These additions were important to understand the texts as a whole. They also alluded to other texts and functioned as intertexts.

From the substantial comments in the margins, the expression *in the margin* created other evaluative meanings, denoting that there must be a *centre* as well and more importantly, that something must be in focus, *à la mode*, better and real, but also as a counterbalance, there must also be something that is *marginal*, ‘having less meaning’, and ‘being of marginal importance’. This in turn leads us to the question of inclusion or exclusion. In other words, some groups or phenomena are regarded as being marginal in society, and thus they are ‘in the marginal zone’.

Semiotics is the general science of signs, sign systems and their usage as well as of their sense, meaning, and signification. Within this field, the concepts of *centre* versus *periphery* are of utmost importance as are borders and borderlines in cultural and societal space (cf. the anthology *Center and Periphery in Representations and Institutions*, ed. by Tarasti 1990). The Greek word *περιφέρειν*, *periphéreîn*, *peri-* means ‘about’, ‘round’ and *-phéreîn* ‘to carry or move around’. Hence, the *periphery* describes a circle with a centre, in which the *margin* marks and borders the circumference. (OED 2019, s.v. *periphery*.)

The phenomenon of translation, whether it exists in the margin or in the periphery, exemplifies that translating, which is manifested in translation products and processes, has been a crucial task in carrying and transferring cultural heritage throughout history, from antiquity to the present. Gradually, transla-

tion in its various forms has gained its own perspective within the humanities. As it developed from philology, contrastive linguistics and comparative literary studies, this discipline received its own designation in the 1970s: *Translation Studies*. According to the proposal by Thomas S. KUHN ([1962] 2012), scientific revolutions are structured and scientific research zigzags from one paradigm to another, illustrating the focus and importance of a scientific theory and the dialogic relationship between the *centre* and *periphery* over time. Various approaches have emerged within Translation Studies from the 1960s to this day. We can notice a similar development within semiotics since antiquity, particularly within modern semiotics from the beginning of the twentieth century.

While the margin/periphery consists of isolated and disparate phenomena, or even chaos, it also exhibits organisation, or a system, in the centre. The theoretical position derived from the system theory in philosophy, *polysystem theory*, claims that phenomena form a cultural entity, a multidimensional repertoire and express the complexity of systems. This orientation was adopted by Russian formalism, functional or dynamic structuralism, semiotics, literary studies, and translation studies since the 1970s (Even-Zohar [1978, 1979] 1990). For instance, literature is not isolated from culture or society, but belongs to a literary field among other literary fields and surrounding systems that are influenced by time, place, authors, translators, genres, literary works, agents, and institutions, to mention a few. Many phenomena are in dialogue, or are polyphonic (Bakhtin 1981: *passim*, Bakhtin [1990] 1997: *passim*). Nonetheless, they also express heteroglossia (resistance, conflicts) in their constant movement between the centre and the periphery in various cultural spaces, which Yuri M. LOTMAN has referred to as *semiospheres* (Lotman 1990: 121–216; for the notions of semiotic space and boundary, see Lotman 1990: 123–130 and 131–142). In these spaces, the act of signification, the dynamic sign action, or *semiosis* if we use Charles S. PEIRCE's terminology (*CP* 5.594, 1903; *EP* 2: 411–413, 1907), manifests itself in the interpretation of various borders and border crossings, sense, meaning, signification, values, and many others.

In the context of translation, *marginalia* must be understood in a broad sense as interpretation, as translative thinking, or as a tool for the mind (Welby [1903] 1983: *passim*, [1911] 1985: *passim*). An example of this would be to adopt a lover's discourse as a method for reading texts and translations (cf. Petrilli in this volume); or to study an individual's (fictional or authentic) microhistory in cultural spaces, with cultural, historical, geographical, and societal phenomena in the margin (cf. Tallberg-Nygård in this volume); or to analyse movements near borderlines (such as those that are linguistic, textual, and normative) offer a new understanding of the life of various signs and their meanings.

Minority and majority literatures are discussed in the Finnish anthology titled *Marginalia ja kirjallisuus: Ääniä suomalaisen kirjallisuuden reunoilta*

[Marginalia and literature: Voices from the periphery in Finnish literature] (Savolainen 1995b). The contributions from this anthology demonstrate that marginality can be envisioned as a question of dichotomies in literary fields: *culture/non-culture* (Greimas 1966: *passim*); *high/popular culture*; *culture/subcultures*; *minority/majority*; *minor/major*; *high/low* (genres of literature); *we/they*; *I/Other*; *own voice(s)/other voices*; *own/foreign* (Bakhtin 1981: *passim*; Kristeva 1988: *passim*; Lotman 1990: *passim*); *marginalisation/displacement of centre/periphery*. These dichotomies from literary fields also convey that there is a continuous *interplay between the centre and the periphery*: centres dissolve themselves and change position constantly. Indeed, differences, heterogeneity, alternatives, and diversity all enter these various centres from the margin/periphery. Yet the social and cultural impact of the periphery can nourish, stimulate and enrich the centre(s) in a creative manner. (Cf. Savolainen 1995a: 12–19, 24–28.)

Throughout literary history, translating and translations essentially remained marginal. However, studies in comparative literature and its history have gradually become aware of the importance of translation history. Currently, there are attempts to write translation history and approach it as an interdisciplinary field in its own right (cf. the launch of a new periodical, *Chronotopos: A journal of translation history*, in 2019). In literary history, there have been gaps, or margins, and genres outside the mainstream genres. These include women's literature, children's and youth literature, linguistic, race and gender minority literatures, popular literature, workers' literature, migration literature, queer literature, regional literature (borderlands), and so on, as well as translations of all these genres.

Both in literary fields and in society and culture as a whole, marginality is a question of an individual's identity (*Moi* in French) on the one hand, and the systemic identity as culture, and society with its norms and rules (*Soi* in French), on the other. This relationship concerns norms, power, domination, values, and attitudes, and results in social, economic and cultural practices and impacts. The relation between *Moi* and *Soi* is a question of the subject/object and various semiotic modalities (cf. Kristeva 1974, 1988; Fontanille 2004; Tarasti 2015; Kukkonen 2009, 2014, 2018a, 2018b; and many others), in existential *being* (the modality of *être*), and *belonging or not-belonging* somewhere *here/there, inside/outside*. It is the inclusion or exclusion of a community, a group, a paradigm, a phenomenon, or a scientific approach. Marginality refers to questions of difference, strangeness, foreignness, otherness as well as the attitudes towards these subjects. Marginality also concerns questions of difference and non-similarity, difference in an otherwise homogenous system. However, marginality/periphery also means diversity, creativity, new openings and perspectives, new possibilities and strengths in relation to the centre with its dominating representations and institutions.

In his novel *The Colossus of Maroussi* ([1941] 1958), a book on travelling in Greece, Henry MILLER (p. 81) writes on marginal matters about “doing of trifles”:

The mastery of great things comes with the doing of trifles; the little voyage is for the timid soul just as formidable as the big voyage for the great one. Voyages are accomplished inwardly, and the most hazardous ones, needless to say, are made without moving from the spot. But the sense of voyage can wither and die. There are adventurers who penetrate to the remotest parts of the earth, dragging to a fruitless goal an animated corpse. The earth pullulates with adventurous spirits who populate it with death: these are the souls who, bent upon conquest, fill the outer corridors of space with strife and bickering. What gives a phantasmal hue to life is this wretched shadow play between ghoulish and ghost. The panic and confusion which grips the soul of the Wonderer is the reverberation of the pandemonium created by the lost and the damned.

Translation constitutes an interpretation of various signs and sign systems. This consists not only of *translation proper*, where verbal signs are also interpreted with those of another language, but of translating as a process of *translative thinking*, or “translating as a tool for the mind”, as the pre-semiotician Victoria WELBY ([1903] 1983: *passim*, [1911] 1985: *passim*) described it in her signification at the beginning of the twentieth century. This *intralingual interpretation* essentially means reformulating or saying something “in other words” to convey what and how we think. Roman JAKOBSON’S ([1959] 1966) three modes of translation or interpretation are well-known, introduced in an article that constitutes a semiotic turn in translation studies. Verbal signs and other communicative signs are also interpreted, transferred, transformed, transposed, as well as transmuted in an *intersemiotic interpretation* process. This is not restricted to verbal signs and non-verbal signs but involves all types of processes of signs and sign systems as part of these processes.

Translation requires an authentic original to be interpreted between various sign or communicative systems. The sign process and sign use (also known as *semiosis*) are dynamic and sense, meaning, and signification emerge in a *punctum*, a *chiasm* (cf. *Kiasm*, ed. by Hartama-Heinonen & Kukkonen 2010). Here, encountering a word – my word and the foreign word (Bakhtin 1981: *passim*) – generates new meanings, signs, and words *ad infinitum* (CP 7.536, undated; EP 2: 10, 1894, EP 2: 477, 1906). It may be that the semantic relation of *denotation* (cognitive meaning) is the linguistic centre, where we are supposed to know the sense, meaning, and the usage of a word, while *connotation* (associative and creative meaning) takes us to the peripheries from where linguistic adventures begin (cf. the quotation of MILLER’S novel above). According to WELBY ([1903] 1983: *passim*, [1911] 1985: *passim*), signification covers a *universe of discourse* with sense (instinctive), meaning (volitional, purposive), and significance (manifold; importance, emotional force, moral aspect, ideal value, and so on), as well as the values of a sign, word, concept, and term – a view that unavoidably leads us to the realm of axiology, ethics, and morality.

FROM TRANSLATIONAL MARGINS
TO TRANSLATION-THEORETICAL PERIPHERIES

In addition to this introductory article, MARGINALIA, Volume 4 in ACTA TRANSLATOLOGICA HELSINGIENSIA contains six peer-reviewed and two non-peer-reviewed articles. The authors of this volume approach translation and interpretation from a marginal or peripheral perspective, yet interpret it as a positive force that sheds light on originally small and strange issues, and thus demonstrate the power of margins, words and translation.

In the first part, “*I, the translator – the Other, the text*”, Susan PETRILLI explores translation and interpretation from an unexpected, yet innovative perspective. She analyses certain texts by Mikhail BAKHTIN and Roland BARTHES through their translations, and then draws a surprising parallel between writing, interpreting, and translating: they are all processes which assume an encounter between *I* and *the Other*, and require an amorous involvement. The act of translation is a lover’s gesture, since translational discourse prompts participation and engagement with the other, the text, and implies a specific, caring relation to this other and its otherness. Yet this amorous process requires one to tolerate ambiguity, make decisions, and be responsible. Despite all the efforts to participate, listen, and enhance involvement, the outcome is characterised by imperfection and provisionality.

The second part, “Beyond marginality”, begins with an article by Sirkku AALTONEN, that examines theatre texts. Compared to other areas within translation research, this genre has been somewhat neglected. This marginality is explained by the fact that theatre translation is something of a moving target: there are too many variables to observe, an absence of objects, and the simultaneous activities of production and consumption. This article emphasises the non-native accents of two famous actors in performances from the early period of the Finnish language theatre.

Johan FRANZON examines the translations of song lyrics. He claims that songs considered to be important in their original culture often fall into the margin in other linguistic cultures, if they are known at all. To support this claim, FRANZON analyses the Finnish song “Rosvo-Roope” and its seven translations into English, Swedish, and Latin. According to FRANZON, several situational and presentational factors can affect the result, ranging from the medium to the users and to the translators’ personal preferences.

Laura LEDEN contributes to this volume by examining the dichotomy of centre versus periphery, and approaches books for girls and their translations as a literary genre with a peripheral status in the literary polysystem. The phenomena that become foregrounded in this discussion and analysis are norms and

constraints, omissions as ideological and educational tools of manipulation, purification and abridgement as strategies, as well as acceptability and adequacy as alternative orientations.

Dainora MAUMEVIČIENĖ describes the history of localisation as one that combines features from the process of interlingual translation and adaptation of the multimodal genres of software, web pages, and games. When information related to locale or culture needs to be translated, strategies such as localisation, transediting, and transcreation are adopted. This is an inherently interdisciplinary phenomenon which no longer dwells in the periphery, but is becoming a main focus in translating and translation studies.

Irma SORVALI discusses a specific, yet a marginal combination and method of language teaching and translation that was introduced by the Englishman James HAMILTON (1769–1829). This method was based on the use of foreign textbooks that contain literal interlinear translations. SORVALI describes the Hamiltonian method, and presents examples of the features in extracts from Swedish translations of Finnish fables. It is important to note that the translator was familiar with the method and system in question.

The first of the non-reviewed articles in the part titled “Reflections” is written by Ritva HARTAMA-HEINONEN. With a focus on Finland, a nation which has two official languages, her article explores certain marginal thoughts evoked by translating and its price. Her approach is characterised by paradoxical concepts such as dichotomies/continua, similarity/diversity, and practice/theory. HARTAMA-HEINONEN emphasises the role of non-marginal humanistic values in her discussion on the price of translating as opposed to not translating, on who the payer is in principle and in practice as well as on what is the overall outcome of translating.

Manuela TALLBERG-NYGÅRD’s contribution is her *lectio praecursoria* from the public examination of her doctoral dissertation at the University of Helsinki in December 2017. Her dissertation focuses on how translations function both in intracultural and intercultural semiospheres, and demonstrates that cultural nearness (centre) and distance (periphery) affect the translations of Finland-Swedish novels into Finnish and German.



We would like to extend our appreciation to the authors of MARGINALIA for their co-operation and for their contributions to this volume. As is customary, the authors are responsible for the conceptual, ethical, linguistic, and textual choices in their articles.

Our gratitude is likewise extended to our anonymous reviewers for their distinguished work and vital comments. Furthermore, we would like to express our

appreciation to the members of the Editorial Board of ACTA TRANSLATOLOGICA HELSINGIENSIA. Finally, we are greatly indebted to the publisher of this series, that is, our community – Nordica, Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian and Scandinavian Studies.

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